

**Thomas Jefferson to James Monroe, February 7, 1801, from The Works of Thomas Jefferson in Twelve Volumes. Federal Edition. Collected and Edited by Paul Leicester Ford.**

**TO JAMES MONROE J. MSS.**

Washington, Feb [ *i. e.* Mar.] 7, 1801.

Dear Sir, —I had written the enclosed letter to Mrs. Trist, and was just proceeding to begin one to you, when your favor of the 6th was put into my hands. I thank you sincerely for it, and consider the views of it so sound, that I have communicated it to my coadjutors as one of our important evidences of the public sentiment, according to which we must shape our course. I suspect, partly from this, but more from a letter of J. Taylor's which had been put into my hands, that an incorrect idea of my views had got abroad. I am in hopes my inaugural address will in some measure set this to rights, as it will present the leading objects to be conciliation and adherence to sound principle. This I know is impracticable with the leaders of the late faction, whom I abandon as incurables, & will never turn an inch out of my way to reconcile them. But with the main body of the federalists, I believe it very practicable. You know that the manœuvres of the year X. Y. Z. carried over from us a great body of the people, real republicans, & honest men under virtuous motives. The delusion lasted a while. At length the poor arts of tub plots, &c. were repeated till the designs of the party became suspected. From that moment those who had left us began to come back. It was by their return to us that we gained the victory in Nov, 1800, which we should not have gained in Nov, 1799. But during the suspension of the public mind from the 11th to the 17th of Feb, and the anxiety & alarm lest there should be no election, & anarchy ensue, a wonderful effect was produced on the mass of federalists who had

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not before come over. Those who had before become sensible of their error in the former change, & only wanted a decent excuse for coming back, seized that occasion for doing so. Another body, and a large one it is, who from timidity of constitution had gone with those who wished for a strong executive, were induced by the same timidity to come over to us rather than risk anarchy: so that, according to the evidence we receive from every direction, we may say that the whole of that

portion of the people which were called federalists, were made to desire anxiously the very event they had just before opposed with all their energies, and to receive the election which was made, as an object of their earnest wishes, a child of their own. These people (I always exclude their leaders) are now aggregated with us, they look with a certain degree of affection and confidence to the administration, ready to become attached to it, if it avoids in the outset acts which might revolt and throw them off. To give time for a perfect consolidation seems prudent. I have firmly refused to follow the counsels of those who have advised the giving offices to some of their leaders, in order to reconcile. I have given, and will give only to republicans, under existing circumstances. But I believe with others, that deprivations of office, if made on the ground of political principles alone, would revolt our new converts, and give a body to leaders who now stand alone. Some, I know, must be made. They must be as few as possible, done gradually, and bottomed on some malversation or inherent disqualification. Where we shall draw the line between retaining all & none, is not yet settled, and will not be till we get our administration together; and perhaps even then, we shall proceed *à talons*, balancing our measures according to the impression we perceive them to make.

This may give you a general view of our plan. Should you be in Albemarle the first week in April, I shall have the pleasure of seeing you there, and of developing things more particularly, and of profiting by an intercommunication of views. Dawson sails for France about the fifteenth, as the *bearer* only of the treaty to Elsworth & Murray. He has probably asked your commands, and your introductory letters.

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Present my respects to Mrs. Monroe, and accept assurances of my high and affectionate consideration and attachment.